



# **Building, Leading, and Maintaining Research Teams**

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# Three Messages

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- ❖ **Effective interdisciplinary teams are needed to meet the challenge of behavioral research today.**
- ❖ Building, leading and maintaining effective interdisciplinary research teams require intention.
- ❖ Effective interdisciplinary teams pay off.



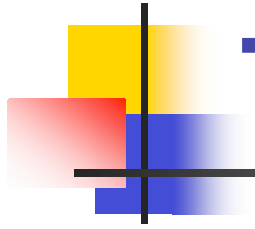
# The Challenge to Research Today

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- ❖ “There has been a scientific revolution the last few years. The opportunities for discoveries has never been greater, but the complexity of biology (behavior) remains a daunting challenge.”

*Dr. Elias Zerhouni, Director, NIH*

*Sept, 2003*



# To Meet the Challenge

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- ❖ Diversity of disciplines is needed for discovering, developing and delivering treatments and making scientific advances.
- ❖ Diverse disciplines can work well in teams.



# A Team is...

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... a small number of consistent people with a shared purpose, common performance goals, complementary skills, and a common approach to its collective work.

*Manion J (1997, Semin Nurse Manag 31-38)*



# **What are the Benefits of Interdisciplinary Research Teams?**

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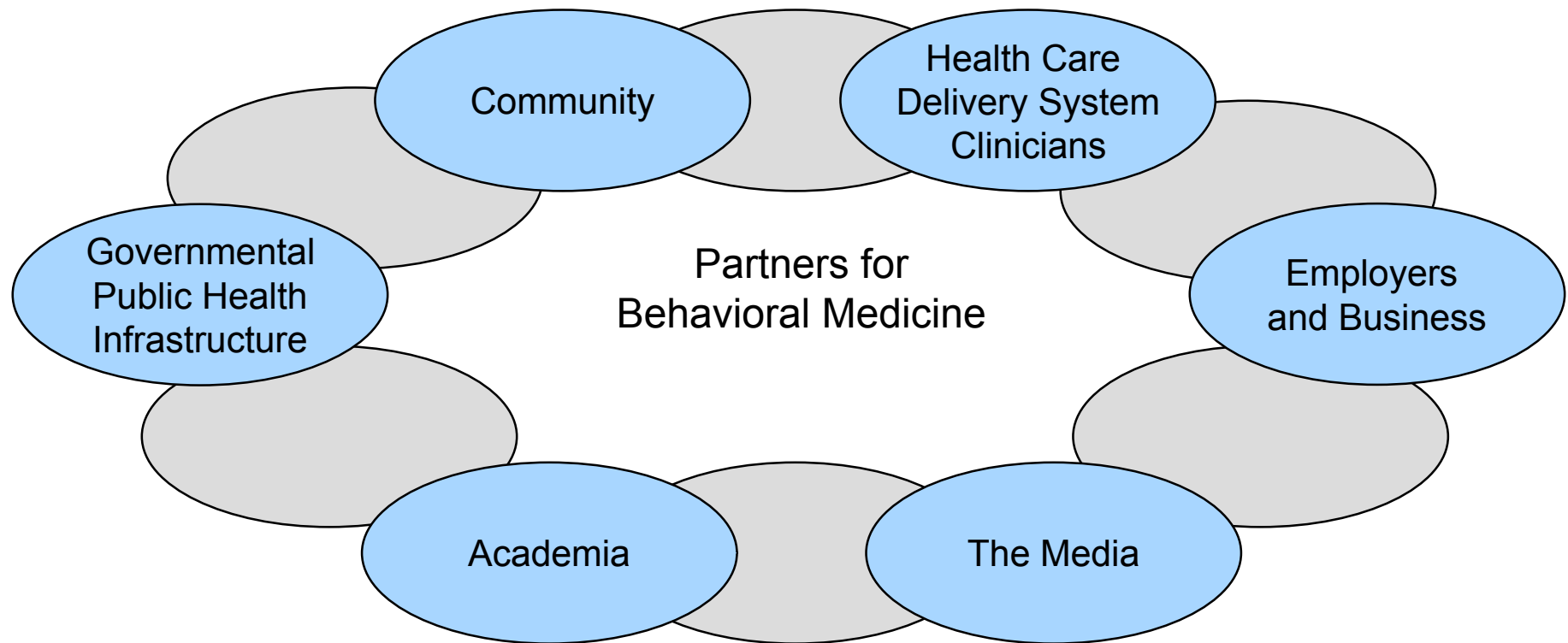
# Interdisciplinary Teams Can Meet the Challenge Research Requires by...

- ❖ Working together from their own perspectives with commonly agreed on goals.
- ❖ Exploring different facets of a question.
- ❖ Providing diverse viewpoints looking at reality and higher levels of explanatory power.
- ❖ Developing innovative approaches for combining skills, methods and disciplines to accelerate discovery.
- ❖ Enhancing the growth of individuals.

*Interdisciplinary research requires team science.*



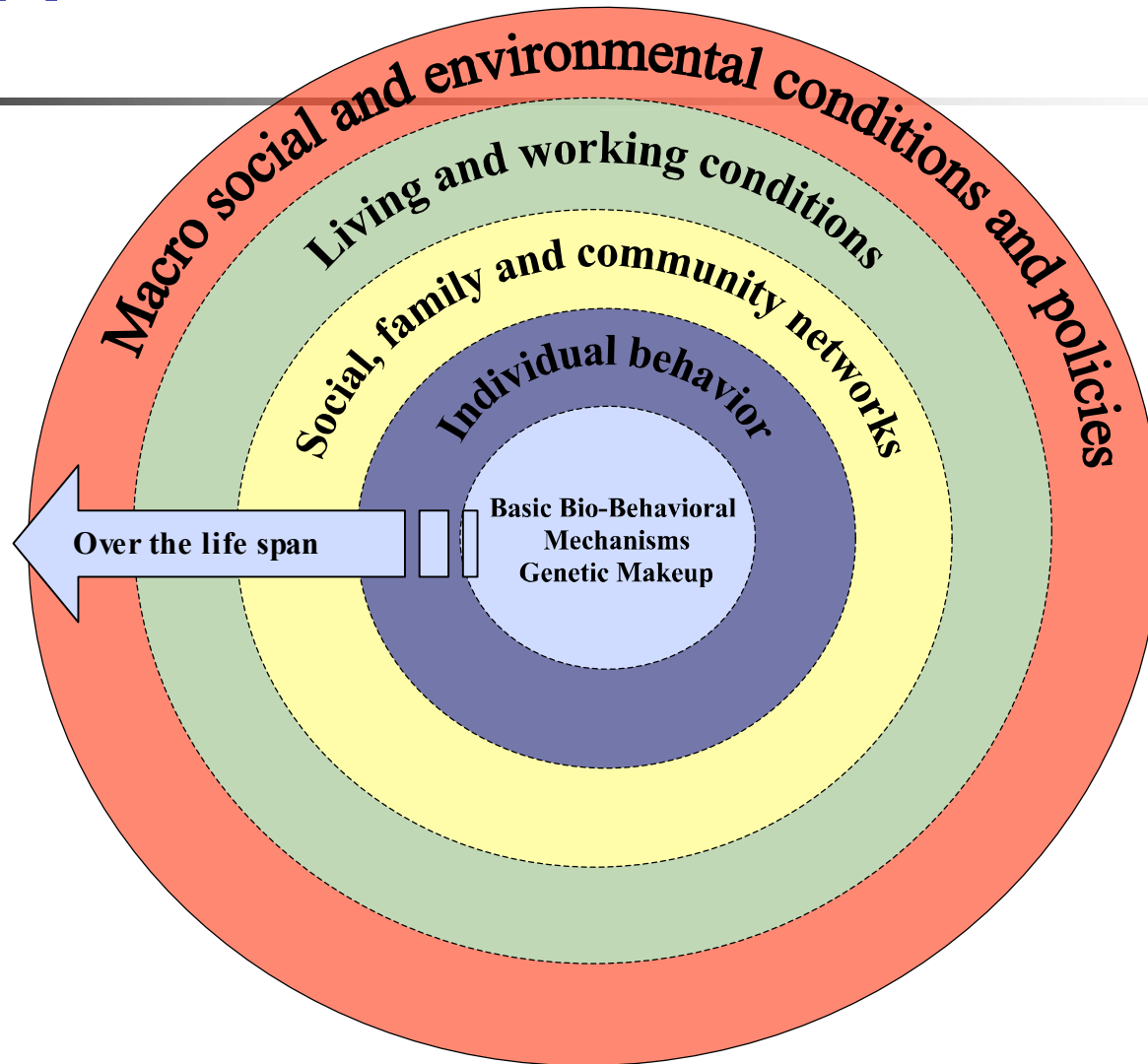
# Partners in Applying Behavioral Medicine Research and Practice



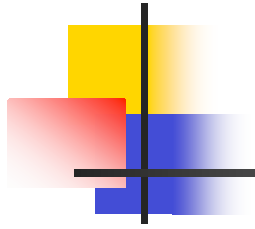
*(The Future of the Public's Health, IOM, 2002)*



# Ecological Model: Multi-Level Approach to Behavioral Problems



*(Assuring the Public Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, IOM, 2002)*



# Interdisciplinary Teams Can Address Multiple Levels in Research

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Social/Environmental

Behavioral/Psychological

Organ Systems

Cellular

Molecular

*Anderson N (1999 Annals NY Acad Sci, 302-12)*



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**Think about effective research  
teams in which you have  
participated**

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**What made them effective?**



# Effective Research Teams Start With...

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Strong Leadership which usually comes from one individual to begin with and progressively comes from the team as a whole or from different members at different times.



# Characteristics of Effective Research Teams

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An effective team...

- ❖ *Agrees* on and commits to shared goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities, and how it will work together.
- ❖ *Communicates* well and appreciates differences.
- ❖ *Expects* members to be accountable, responsible, and prepared.
- ❖ *Shares* information, perspectives, and progress.

*Leadership is a continuing requirement for success.*



# Good Leaders are Intentional: They Facilitate “ACES”

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They:

- ❖ Communicate well.
- ❖ Are enthusiastic and committed to a goal.
- ❖ Draw on each member’s strengths.
- ❖ Respect others.
- ❖ Establish direction.
- ❖ Have skills in group dynamics.
- ❖ Build trust and confidence.



# Characteristics of Effective Research Teams

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**To sum it up...**

*Objectives and roles are clear and leadership strong;*

*Communication is good;*

*The structure is strong and understood;*

*The rules of the road are clear and democratic;*

*Everybody benefits.*





# **How do you Build an Effective Interdisciplinary Research Team?**

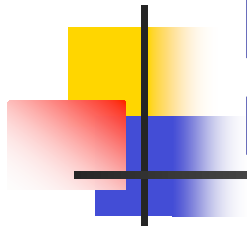
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# Building Effective Research Teams

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- ❖ Network.
- ❖ Meet with people to determine their research interests.
- ❖ Go outside your department or school if necessary.
- ❖ Determine appropriate disciplines and participants.
- ❖ Find a mentor.
- ❖ Don't be timid.



## **Building Effective Research Teams: Determining Appropriate Disciplines**

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- ❖ Use your theoretical framework to guide.
- ❖ Funding agencies often suggest disciplines.
- ❖ Decide on the skills and competencies needed.
- ❖ Each discipline included should have a role and provide a unique contribution.
- ❖ Include a research assistant or project director to provide infrastructure support.



## **Building Effective Research Teams: Choosing Participants (*cont*)**

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- ❖ Every team member should be able to articulate the role of other members. Cross-training is not needed. A clear understanding of roles is needed.



## **Building Effective Research Teams: Inviting Participants**

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- ❖ Describe clearly and comprehensively the research issue.
- ❖ Put goals and aims on paper even if tentative.
- ❖ Communicate benefits for participating.
- ❖ Develop strategy to communicate results to other involved individuals not invited to the meetings.



# Example of an Effective Interdisciplinary Research Team

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- ❖ Use of Soy Isoflavones for Menopausal Vasomotor Symptoms
  - ❖ Daidzein
  - ❖ Genistein
- ❖ NCCAM Application



## **Soy Isoflavones for Menopausal Vasomotor Symptoms: Primary Aims (3 of 6)**

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- ❖ To assess the feasibility of recruitment and retention of women for a RCT of isoflavone supplements for the reduction of VMS.

Disciplines: Behavioral scientist, health educator, biostatistician, physician



## **Soy Isoflavones for Menopausal Vasomotor Symptoms: Primary Aims *(cont)***

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- ❖ To examine the adherence of women to using an isoflavone capsule to reduce VMS.

Disciplines: Behavioral scientist, health educator, biochemist, biostatistician, physician

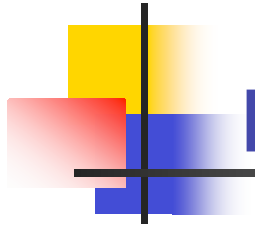




## **Soy Isoflavones for Menopausal Vasomotor Symptoms: Disciplines and Contributions**

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- ❖ Judith Ockene, Div of Prev & Behav Med (DPBM), UMMS, PI, Behavioral Scientist
- ❖ Elizabeth Jackson, Div of Cardiology, UMMS, Co-PI, Physician
- ❖ Nancy Avis, Wake Forest Univ School of Med, QoL Consultant
- ❖ Linda Churchill, DPBM, UMMS, Project Director, Health Educator
- ❖ Sybil Crawford, DPBM, UMMS, Biostatistician
- ❖ Jennifer Kelsey, DPBM, UMMS, Epidemiologist, Women's Health
- ❖ Barbara Olendzki, Div of Prev & Behav Med, UMMS, Nutritionist
- ❖ Johanna Lampe, Nutritional Consultant, FHCRC



# Leading Effective Research Teams

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- ❖ Prepare an agenda.
- ❖ Develop a structure for how team will work together.
- ❖ Attend to logistics.
- ❖ Facilitate effectively.



# Develop a Structure: Questions for Teams to Address

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- ❖ What are our norms for working together?
- ❖ How will we communicate with each other?
- ❖ How will we make decisions?
- ❖ How will we resolve conflict?
- ❖ What decisions are individual ones and what are team decisions?
- ❖ How often will we meet?
- ❖ Will we keep minutes?
- ❖ What are members' responsibilities?



# Develop a Structure: Norms

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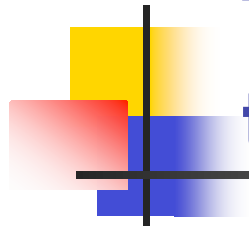
- ❖ Participate
- ❖ Responsibility
- ❖ Open Mind
- ❖ Confidentiality
- ❖ Experiment
- ❖ Sensitivity – Feedback
- ❖ Speak Out



# Leading Effective Research Teams: Facilitating a Meeting

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- ❖ Keep the meeting focused and moving forward.
- ❖ Open with short summary of purpose and agenda.
- ❖ Stick to time allocated for each item.
- ❖ Close each item with actions to be taken – by whom and by when.



**Think about an effective research team which continued long-term**

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**What contributed to its long-term success?**



# Characteristics of a Maintained Effective Team

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- ❖ Doesn't waste time –stays focused.
- ❖ Measures its progress by attainment of goals and objectives.
- ❖ Identifies and deals with challenges.
- ❖ Open to everyone's perspectives/views.
- ❖ Everyone benefits and has fun.



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